

Name of meeting: Cabinet

Date: 16/11/2021

Title of report: Household Support Fund

Purpose of report: To set out council proposals to provide assistance to households in most need of support over the winter as the economy recovers in accordance with the guidance issued by the Government.

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	Yes – 12/11/2021  If yes give the reason why – Government funded assistance package borough wide, totalling £3.7m
Key Decision - Is it in the <u>Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports)</u> ?	Key Decision – Yes  Private Report/Private Appendix – No
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	Yes
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name  Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?  Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?	Rachel Spencer-Henshall Mel Meggs  Eamonn Croston  Julie Muscroft
Cabinet member <a href="#">portfolio</a>	Cllr Paul Davies – Welfare and Exchequer

Electoral wards affected: All Wards councillors consulted: None

Public or private: Public

Has GDPR been considered? Yes

## 1. Summary

Since the beginning of the Covid 19 pandemic, Kirklees Council has been working in close collaboration with the voluntary sector, our schools and other partners, to wrap support around our children, their families, and other households in need.

This has been particularly key in terms of supporting Free School Meal entitlement alongside the Government schemes which, together with our schools and settings has seen support for children and families over the holiday periods, and through periods of self-isolation. Grant funding received from Government over the last 12 months has been used to provide support with food, fuel and other essential items. This grant funding has been used for households both with and without children.

On 30 September 2021, Government announced a national £500m “Household Support Fund”, to be made available from 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022. This Council’s share is £3.702m, and will enable the Council, in collaboration with schools and other key partners, to provide support to families with children and other households in need from early October 2021 and covers the period until the end of March 2022.

Whilst the funding is not purely targeted at supporting families entitled to Free School Meals during holiday periods, the grant conditions allows for the funding being used for that purpose.

A link to the Government Household Support Fund launch is included in Section 8 of this report.

## 2. Information required to take a decision

- 2.1 The grant is provided to upper tier authorities with the guidance including suggestions that authorities might look to other authorities to deliver if they are better placed to do so. This does not apply to this Council.
- 2.2 The grant can be used for existing Council schemes e.g. Local Welfare Provision schemes, and other support that delivers the same outcomes and where the need is greatest.
- 2.3 Payment to those entitled can be via cash, BACS payment, vouchers or in kind.
- 2.4 Support can be delivered directly by the council or in conjunction with third party organisations. Third party organisations can be Schools, Charities or other voluntary organisations.
- 2.5 Guidance issued states in relation to Free School Meal support:

*“The Household Support Fund is not intended to replicate or replace Free School Meals and Authorities should avoid duplicating provision where possible.*

*However, Authorities have discretion over how they use the funding within the grant framework and within the stipulated time period.*

*Therefore, Authorities may choose to offer awards to families in receipt of Free School Meals over the entirety of the school holidays, if they consider this to be appropriate in their area.”*

- 2.6 It is important to note that at least 50% of the funding must be targeted at households with children with the remainder available for households without children.
- 2.7 The Council has a Local Welfare Provision scheme that provides financial support and advice to those struggling to afford food and essentials. The guidance classifies the grant fund as Local Welfare Provision, so can be used to augment the current Local Welfare Provision offer. The council has discretion to extend that offer.
- 2.8 On 18 October 2021, the Chief Executive made an officer delegated decision to award those children in receipt of means-tested Free School Meals to receive vouchers of £25 per child (£15 for food, and £10 towards fuel) in respect of the October 2021 half-term holiday.
- 2.9 It is intended that officers will work with services and partners to identify recipients through the Local Welfare Provision scheme. This approach will take advantage of the existing administration and delivery mechanisms that meets the needs of any resident before that resident finds that they are without the food and essential supplies they need, because they have insufficient means to meet all of their liabilities.
- 2.10 This will ensure the most appropriate and timely interventions with services and partners, including but not limited to:
- a) Food: Whether in kind or through vouchers or cash, including breakfast clubs
  - b) Energy and water: For any form of fuel and water bill
  - c) Essentials linked to energy and water: Including sanitary products, warm clothing, soap, blankets, boiler service/repair, purchase of equipment including fridges, freezers, ovens, etc
  - d) Wider essentials: Including broadband or phone bills, clothing, and essential transport-related costs such as repairing a car, buying a bicycle or paying for fuel
  - e) Housing Costs: In exceptional cases of genuine emergency where there is no other existing mechanism of support to meet that cost of rent (mortgage costs are not included)
- 2.11 While the one-off Government Household Support funding is welcomed, the relatively late announcement on 6 October 2021 means a short timescale for the Council to effectively plan for, target and distribute £3.7m funding to those most in need over the 2021 Winter and early 2022 new year period. In light of this, the range of interventions set out above will need to be continually reviewed and flexed accordingly for maximum effect. In view of this, it is recommended that Cabinet delegate authority to the relevant Strategic Directors, in agreement with the relevant portfolio holders and Service Director Finance, to direct the resource to appropriate interventions through the remainder of the current financial year.

### **3. Implications for the Council**

#### **3.1 Working with People**

The proposals set out in this report increase available household income so potentially reducing poverty.

The increase in funding available for discretionary support around food and essentials allows us to meet the needs of families and individuals that are experiencing increased food and fuel costs.

### **3.2 Working with Partners**

The Council is actively engaged in discussions with the Third Sector about how the Household Support Fund might help them and therefore us to support those most in need through the wider Community Response.

We are engaging through the Food Networks, Community Response, Third Sector, Council Services and Kirklees Advice providers.

### **3.3 Place Based Working**

As part of our working with partners we have been supporting a response that is being delivered at community level.

### **3.4 Climate Change and Air Quality**

Not Applicable

### **3.5 Improving outcomes for children**

Increases available household income so potentially reducing poverty and providing the equivalent value of Free School Meals during holiday periods, as well as help towards fuel costs and warm clothing.

### **3.6 Other (e.g. Legal/Financial or Human Resources)**

#### **Financial**

3.7 Government has provided Grant Funding of £ £3,702,823.27 which it is expected is spent in its entirety in the period 06 October 2021 to 31 March 2022.

3.8 Providing the equivalent of Free School Meal and fuel support for approximately 16,500 children over the October, Christmas, and upcoming February holidays at the equivalent £25 per eligible child per week, is equivalent to £1.65m. That would leave £2.05m to support families and individuals more generally. It is intended that this funding will be allocated to the Council's existing Local Welfare Provision Fund which supports our most vulnerable families and individuals across the borough.

#### **Legal**

3.10 The funding is a one-off contribution for the 2021-22 financial year and is made under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.

3.11 Ordinarily Local Welfare Provision payments are made under that section and then count as "public funds" for the purposes of immigration and would not therefore be available to those with no recourse to public funds. Payments made here will be made in accordance with the Grant Determination as detailed above and are subject to the conditions set out by the Secretary of State in that determination:

*“Authorities must use their judgement to decide what legal powers and funding can be used to support individuals who are ineligible for public funds or statutory housing assistance.”*

## **Human Resources**

- 3.12 The Household Support Fund can be used to pay for reasonable administration costs, but it is not envisaged that the council will use any of the fund to cover its own costs. Additional Welfare & Exchequer capacity is supporting Council Local Welfare Provision activity, and this is being funded from other New Burdens Government funding. Third party organisations can direct some of the funding they will receive through the Household Support Fund to their reasonable costs.

## **4 Consultees and their opinions**

- 4.1 Officers have established dialogue with a number of colleagues across services and disciplines including Housing Solutions, Homes and Neighbourhoods, Council Tax, Childrens Services, Adult Services, Stronger Families, Migration and Refugees, Public Health.
- 4.2 Partners including Kirklees Citizens Advice and Law Centre, The Welcome Centre, Fusion Housing, Batley Food Bank, Third Sector Leaders, Uniform Exchange, Kirklees College, schools.
- 4.3 All those consulted welcome the opportunity to increase household incomes to create greater resilience meeting either short-term need or creating opportunities to reduce debt or access services and/or goods that might otherwise have been unachievable.

## **5 Next steps and timelines**

To continue those discussions with services and partners so that officers can immediately identify those that can receive payments from the scheme and to establish ways in which we can use that money to achieve better outcomes for each individual or family.

## **6 Officer recommendations and reasons**

Cabinet are asked to approve that the £3,702,823 Household Support Fund government grant is allocated to support financially vulnerable families and individuals in accordance with the following:

- 6.1 That a sum equivalent to at least £50 per means-tested Free School Meal child be provided to Schools and colleges in order that they can provide a voucher for food and fuel for the December holiday.
- 6.2 That a sum equivalent to at least £25 per means-tested Free School Meal child be provided to Schools and colleges in order that they can provide a voucher for food and fuel for the February holiday.
- 6.3 That the balance of funding available, estimated to be £2.05m, be allocated to the Local Welfare Provision budget to support the meeting of additional support for food, fuel, and other essentials in accordance with the grant determination and guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 6.4 That delegated authority be given to Strategic Director for Corporate Strategy, Commissioning and Public Health and Service Director for Children’s Services,

in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder for Welfare and Exchequer and Service Director – Finance, to further amend the indicative resource allocations across interventions as set out in this report (e.g. to reduce underspend, provide additional support to targeted groups), to ensure full utilisation of the £3.7m Government funding to 31 March 2022.

### **Portfolio Holder Comments:**

Cllr Davies fully supports the recommendations as outlined in this report.

“On 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021, the Leadership Management Team supported the decision to utilise the Household Support Fund to provide help towards food, fuel and other essential items over the winter period to households both with and without children. This report recognises and welcomes the support the Government is providing to our vulnerable households.”

## **7 Contact officer**

Ferhat Bano – Assistant Senior Manager, Welfare and Exchequer  
Rebecca Reid – Assistant Senior Manager, Welfare and Exchequer  
Julian Hobson – Senior Manager, Welfare and Exchequer Services

## **8 Background Papers and History of Decisions**

Government Household Support Fund launch:

[Government launches £500m support for vulnerable households over winter - GOV.UK](#)

Cabinet Decision: Local Authority COVID Winter Grant scheme; 15/12/2020

<https://democracy.kirklees.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=9137>

Officer delegated Decision (Chief Executive): Free School Meal vouchers; 12/10/2021

<https://democracy.kirklees.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=9695>

Documents from government:

Appendix 1 – Grant launch letter

Appendix 2 – Grant determination letter

Appendix 3 – Grant guidance

Please note that the documents are titled as DRAFT, but no further documents have yet been received.

### **Service Director responsible**

Jo-anne Sanders – Service Director Learning & Early Support  
Eamonn Croston – Service Director - Finance